

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Watertown Box Corp.

#### North Dakota Manufacturing Extension Partnership

#### Watertown Box Packages Lean Success

##### Client Profile:

Watertown Box is a manufacturer of corrugated boxes located in Watertown, South Dakota. The company has approximately 40 employees and distributes its products primarily in North and South Dakota and Minnesota. Watertown Box was founded in 1984 with five employees, and has steadily grown to nearly 50 employees and annual sales of \$6 million. The plant uses 5 million square feet of corrugated board monthly for the variety of boxes being manufactured.

##### Situation:

After attending a public Lean 101 training session, two Watertown Box employees attempted to implement a number of the lean manufacturing concepts, but quickly realized that all employees needed to be introduced to the process to make it effective. Initial training showed the company that the plant could be doing a better job with inventory control, and improvements could be made to the flow process. Watertown Box invited the North Dakota Manufacturing Extension Partnership (ND MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, to spend a week at Watertown Box in April 2002.

##### Solution:

ND MEP provided lean training to every Watertown Box employee. As a result, employees have been applying many concepts--such as 5S--into the workplace. The team is also focused on reducing the time it takes to change over equipment and reducing lengthy inventory storage time. With a simple understanding and new-found appreciation for lean manufacturing concepts, Watertown Box employees have made significant changes to operations that improve the overall business for the company.

##### Results:

Reduced the amount of finished goods inventory from 90 days to 60 days; the amount of days continues to decline.  
Freed approximately 2,000 square-feet of warehouse space for production uses.  
Cleaned and organized the entire facility.  
Improved safety and ergonomics for everyone on the shop floor.  
Reduced changeover times on the most highly utilized piece of equipment within the plant.  
Improved production operations by identifying and eliminating wastes based on

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the input from all shop floor employees.

Added a taper machine that will provide additional flexibility within production scheduling and increase plant output.

### **Testimonial:**

"We're fired up! Lean is contagious! Lean is going to continue to be a successful journey for us. We will continue to use and improve. Today, our plant looks good and we're more productive...One thing about being a small manufacturer is that we need to look for outside experts. The North Dakota Manufacturing Extension Partnership is a great resource to have. We simply don't have the luxury of having all of that knowledge on staff."

Mark Kludt, Plant Manager